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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

Despatch No. 188  
July 31, 1958

TO : Department of State, WASHINGTON

FROM : American Embassy, BONN

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SUBJECT: Minister Strauss on German Security Policy.

In a lecture on the "Security Policy of the Federal Republic of Germany in the Atomic Age" given by Defense Minister Franz-Josef Strauss on July 29 to a University of Bonn audience, he prophesied that the big nuclear bomb renders the big war unlikely. In pointing out that hardly anyone today would be so insane as to start a nuclear war, which would involve self-annihilation for the aggressor, he referred to the fact that even Hitler did not make use of gas weapons in the face of certain defeat and surmised that if Hitler could have but foreseen the outcome of World War II he certainly would never have started it.

Strauss told his University audience that German military security could no longer be thought of solely in terms of preventing territorial invasion, inasmuch as one modern supersonic aircraft with 25 high-yield nuclear bombs could bring life in the territory of the Federal Republic to an end. While on the subject of atomic weapons he expressed his hope that the circle of A-bomb possessors would remain limited. He stated that if the government, which would probably next profess to join the "Atoms Club" (obviously referring to France), would voluntarily renounce such weapons, such an act might bring strong moral pressure to bear on other would-be atomic power aspirants and thus make a contribution to a better climate for disarmament negotiations.

He discussed German neutrality both in terms of political and military connotations. He stated that a unilateral declaration of neutrality on the part of Germany would be to no avail without the proper "geographical prerequisites". In this connection the Minister mentioned Belgium, whose neutrality was twice disregarded by Germany, and stated that the Austrians now admit they cannot remain neutral without the countries next to them also being neutral. He added that "disengagement" might either be good or bad depending on its nature, but that real dangers might be created if a vacuum were established in Central Europe. He added that the Zonal Border between East and West Germany was today far more quiet than many other borders in the world.

COMMENT: (CONFIDENTIAL)

The above speech was given coverage only in the Bonn "Generalanzeiger" and the Embassy believes it is interesting in several respects.

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AmEmbassy Bonn

In the first place this adds another chapter to Strauss' book of cryptic statements on the role of atomic weapons, and particularly retaliatory weapons. It is not clear whether one should draw the inference from his statement that because big bombs render big wars unlikely, the likelihood of limited or conventional wars in Europe increases. His statement that defense is no longer a problem of overrunning territory is of course a recognition that a forward strategy must take into account possibilities of destruction from the air as well as invasion in the more traditional terms.

The Embassy considers it interesting that Minister Strauss, who several months back appeared somewhat interested in assisting the French in a program of nuclear weapons development, should now speak out so frankly against other nations joining the "Atoms Club". This may be another manifestation of cooling relationship between France and Germany, as well as possibly a reaction to French pressures on the Federal Republic to buy French armament.

For the Ambassador:

*Henry J. Tasca*

Henry J. Tasca  
Minister for Economic Affairs

COORD: POL: F. O. Allen

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